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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TUNIS 001204

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/MAG (LAWRENCE)

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SUBJECT: GENERAL JONES MEETING WITH TUNISIAN DEPUTY FM
CHTIIOUI

Classified By: CDA David Ballard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Meeting Participants:

U.S.:

General Jones
Charge Ballard
General Gration, EUCOM
Ambassador Staples, POLAD
CSM McMichael
Pol/Econ Counselor (notetaker)

Tunisia:

Secretary of State for American and Asian Affairs Chtioui

SIPDIS

Ambassador Atallah, America and Asia Division
Mr. Faycal Gouia, Americas Division
Mr. Abdulaziz Ghodbene, Americas Division
Mr. Yassine Oued, Americas Division

1. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with MFA Deputy Foreign Minister for American and Asian Affairs Chtioui June 3, General Jones urged continued Tunisian cooperation with EUCOM and NATO as both entities expanded their scope to include Africa. Chtioui said Tunisia was ready to work together in a number of ways, but urged increased military assistance to update Tunisia's aging/non-operational equipment. General Jones said he would do everything he could to understand Tunisia's needs and address them. He offered an overview of NATO's efforts to become a more flexible, proactive, global organization with a role in Africa--a role opposed by some in Europe. He encouraged Tunisia's continued involvement in the Mediterranean Dialogue and Operation Active Endeavor. Chtioui told General Jones that Tunisia supported a cooperative network--civil and military--to address immigration and counter-terrorism concerns; Tunisia coordinated with other "5 plus 5" countries on tactics. In response to a request from Chtioui and Atallah, General Jones summarized the status of the new TSCTI and other possible changes to EUCOM's basing structure during transformation. Chtioui urged the U.S. to involve Libya in regional efforts as soon as possible, so it could normalize relations across the board. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Commander, U.S. European Command, General Jones met with Deputy Foreign Minister for American and Asian Affairs Chtioui June 3 to urge continued Tunisian cooperation with EUCOM and NATO as both entities expanded their scope to include Africa. Chtioui said Tunisia was ready; it had always taken regional threats seriously and was intent on keeping Tunisia's borders secure. But she urged U.S. help in renewing Tunisia's aging aircraft and equipment. She said, for example, that Italy had provided them with assistance to help stem illegal immigration from Africa, and as a result Tunisia had stopped "thousands" of illegal migrants. General Jones said he was aware of some of Tunisia's equipment problems and would do everything he could to understand the needs and address them.

NATO and EUCOM Shifts to the South

3. (C) General Jones said that since the end of the Cold War, NATO's orientation and mission since the end of the Cold War had changed; there was a re-focus southward in the Mediterranean and Africa. The Alliance was moving from a static, defensive, reactive body to one that was extended, flexible, more global. The shift was not easy, as there was a view in Europe that NATO has no role in Africa. Nonetheless, they had re-vitalized the mil-mil context of the Mediterranean Dialogue and looked forward to Tunisia's continued involvement in that process. The centerpiece of the effort would be Operation Active Endeavor, aimed at helping participating countries and ensuring the security and stability of the Mediterranean--extending perhaps even to the Black Sea. General Jones said Cap Verde had agreed to his proposal to host an exercise with the new NATO Response Force. He had also arranged a NATO-led assistance mission to Darfur at the recent AU meeting in Addis Ababa. At the same time, General Jones said he was looking to expand EUCOM's

scope in Africa as well.

14. (C) On terrorism, General Jones said Tunisia seemed to understand the broad, international nature of the threat, but he wondered if the Europeans shared the understanding that it could not be handled as a domestic issue. Chtioui said Tunisia had long appreciated the nature of the threat, and in 1995 Tunisian President Ben Ali had warned that Europe was being used as a staging ground for exiled extremists. Now, most people were aware of the problem, but still differed over the methods of fighting terrorism. Tunisia liked the network/information sharing approach, both on the civilian and military sides, and was working very closely with European "5 plus 5" neighbors (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Malta) to coordinate tactics. Chtioui again urged more material assistance to African nations to ensure they could work as an effective part of the network.

15. (C) General Jones and Chtioui agreed that security would come from proactive, preventive policies--a shift from NATO's traditional approach--and sustained partnerships. The envelope of security requires a solid fusion of military, economic, and social support, General Jones said, and Chtioui agreed that had been Tunisia's experience since the 80s.

Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI)

16. (C) Chtioui asked for a brief on TSCTI. General Jones summarized that it was a new concept, a EUCOM idea that now involved nine countries, including Tunisia. It was designed to be proactive and promote cooperation and intelligence sharing; hopefully it would help friends in the region get the help they needed to combat terrorism. But it was just getting off the ground, and while there seemed to be good support for the Initiative in Washington, good sources of funding had not yet been established.

17. (C) Ambassador Atallah (who was until recently Tunisia's Ambassador to the U.S) asked General Jones to elaborate on structural changes to EUCOM that seemed to be on the horizon. General Jones explained there would be a reduction in the number of forces in Europe, but the force left behind (which would include rotational forces) would be more strategically oriented. Part of the change would involve a menu of basing options, all existing with the agreement of the host government: There would be permanent, strategic bases such as Ramstein, forward-operating sites such as Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo, which were large but not designed to be permanent; "cooperative security locations" where basic services (water, electricity, a runway) existed and could be used for short, 30-60 day missions including humanitarian or medical missions. Finally, there would be bilateral agreements to conduct training; these would normally involve a Status of Forces Agreement with the U.S.. General Jones said all these options could help the speed and proactiveness of EUCOM forces, while at the same time being less costly and less visible to host nation populations.

Algeria/Libya:

18. (C) Chtioui asked about engagement with Libya, commenting that Libya had often been critical of Tunisia's involvement with the U.S., but Libya's inclusion in this regional effort would help it normalize relations on all fronts. General Jones said there were some political issues still on the table with Libya, such as the detention of the Bulgarian medical workers, but all signs were that once these were resolved there would be room for engagement. On Algeria, General Jones said that in the last few years, cooperation with Algeria had "improved dramatically."

19. (C) Comment: The Tunisian message to General Jones is clearly "we want to participate, cooperate to the extent we can, but we need help." The exchange may have suggested to the Tunisian side that if they increase their participation in Active Endeavor and in the planning for TSCTI, there may be a material pay off down the road. While the GOT has always preferred to be discreet about its military relationship with the U.S. in terms of its public, we did not sense any fence sitting on their part regarding future involvement with EUCOM or NATO on that score. That said, various media regional reports have exaggerated plans for future basing, including in Tunisia, and the Tunisian side was probably tasked with trying to clarify that issue.

BALLARD